CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 12 June 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mrs. Diallo (Senegal)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 767th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on the list of speakers today the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Moustapha Niasse, and the representatives of Finland and Mexico.

Allow me first of all to welcome warmly to the Conference on Disarmament the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of my country. I am honoured to receive my Minister at the time when Senegal is occupying the Chair. Mr. Moustapha Niasse has occupied a variety of very high government posts over the last 25 years. He has been closely involved in the formulation and conduct of Senegal's foreign policy. So I would like to thank him very warmly for having agreed to come and set forth the views of Senegal on the questions before us, and to tell him how proud I am to see him amongst us today.

Once we have come to the end of the list of speakers, I intend to submit to the Conference for decision the request made by Côte d'Ivoire to participate in our work as an observer during 1997. With your agreement, I plan to invite the Conference to take a decision on this request without first studying it during an informal meeting. I call on His Excellency the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Moustapha Niasse, to take the floor.

Mr. NIASSE (Senegal) (translated from French): It is with particular pleasure that I find myself before you here in Geneva this morning to express the interest that my country, Senegal, has in the work being accomplished by the Conference on Disarmament. But allow me first of all, Madam President, to congratulate you on the remarkable way in which you have been guiding the proceedings during this period of the Conference, and I say this with all the more pleasure because - this is rarely said about ladies - when we found ourselves at secondary school, both in the same year in the first form, even then the qualities you displayed through your seriousness, your precision and the sense of morality which your family inculcated into you even at that early age, I could not have guessed that we would meet again here, just as we were several decades ago, side by side on the same seat in the same class, in the same school, when we were only 11 years old, to congratulate you and pay tribute once again to your achievements in your country's diplomatic service, as a woman in a senior position, known and recognized on the international scene. I did not want to go any further without paying tribute to you here, formally, because it is indeed the will of God which has allowed such a circumstance to enable us today to stress all this for the benefit of your colleagues.

I have come to bring you the message from a country, Senegal, which is known to you all for its devotion to peace through dialogue and consultation. A country which has set as a cardinal principle of its foreign policy the establishment of friendly and brotherly relations with all the States of the world without exception, beginning with those in the same subregion and the same continent, mother Africa. A country which is a party to every treaty and

every convention in the area of disarmament. Lastly, a country, Senegal, which has never had the desire or the ambition to acquire weapons of mass destruction. A country whose leaders, and first and foremost His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic, have always resolutely urged the transfer of considerable resources devoted to the acquisition of ever more sophisticated and unfortunately ever more expensive weapons for purposes of development for the welfare and progress of all of mankind. That country cannot but be mindful of the mission you are pursuing, distinguished representatives of your countries on the diplomatic plane, because ultimately that mission is a mission of peace, a mission which is oriented towards the promotion of a world in which greater security will prevail, in which greater stability will prevail.

It is more than half a century - it was in 1952 - since the Disarmament Commission was created. Later it became the Committee and then the Conference on Disarmament. And this forum, which is your forum, has striven since then, with great discretion, but also, it must be acknowledged, with great effectiveness, to seek, to search for, to find, to establish the most appropriate ways and means to limit the arms race throughout the world. It is necessary to state and to welcome the fact that the outcome of those efforts has been positive in many ways. It is in that light that your forum was able to establish an effective regime of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons by drawing up, as early as 1968, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Moreover, two years ago, in May 1995, the duration of that treaty was extended, and extended indefinitely. Senegal, as you know, was one of the first United Nations member countries to affix its signature to the treaty. Similarly, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, which the Conference on Disarmament arranged to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 1996 in New York, was an additional landmark on the road towards the achievement of an objective which is dear to us all: that of the complete cessation of the nuclear arms race.

In the area of weapons of mass destruction, the Conference has been able to achieve significant progress by sponsoring the adoption by the world community of legal instruments aimed at eliminating entire categories of weapons such as biological weapons and, more recently, chemical weapons of all categories. As we know, the conclusion of these agreements required years and even decades of discreet and arduous negotiations. This is because your task remains both complex and difficult; but it is also useful and even essential for world security. Indeed, it was because it had become aware of the importance of that task, and because it is involved in everything that can promote our collective security, that Senegal had for several years been seeking to become a member of the Conference on Disarmament. Today, all of us together must welcome the fact that that request has finally been granted. Indeed, I cannot fail to avail myself of this opportunity to express to you all our profound gratitude in that regard.

Our country has joined this august assembly at a time when the cold war is already behind us, and when confrontation seems to have given way to greater cooperation and greater understanding. The result has been a significant reduction in the stockpiles of weapons of the major military

(Mr. Niasse, Senegal)

Powers. The spectre of a nuclear confrontation is therefore becoming increasingly remote. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the threat of weapons of mass destruction is more real than ever, and nobody can deny that; and the risk of proliferation has still not disappeared today. What is more, trafficking in nuclear material unfortunately makes the use of such material for terrorist purposes increasingly probable. At the same time, the proliferation of conventional weapons, maintained by the persistence of regional and local conflicts on various continents, is continuing unrelentingly at the world level. In other words, the Conference on Disarmament will have to begin work in new areas which will be just as important as those in which the ground has already been cleared with courage and persistence.

Among these new areas, I particularly wish to refer to the question of anti-personnel landmines. The ravages caused by those mines every day and everywhere in different parts of the world are well known to you. The fact that those weapons strike indiscriminately and, above all, cause physical harm to innocent civilians, including many children, is also something that you know. We believe, for our part, that the time has come to eradicate that scourge at last. Indeed, it is with the strength of that conviction that we fully approve of the Ottawa Process which is aimed at promoting the elimination of those weapons because our continent of Africa has been suffering more than any other from that proliferation. Indeed, our concern in this regard was recently manifested by the convening in South Africa from 19 to 21 May 1997 of an African regional meeting, a meeting at which a number of recommendations were drawn up. We know that this question does not appear explicitly in the agenda which you adopted for the present session; but we are also aware that many voices have already been raised in this forum to emphasize and express the wish that the Conference on Disarmament should find appropriate machinery to consider the matter appropriately, for example through the appointment of a special coordinator on landmines. What is fundamental is that this Conference should address this matter and help us to resolve it on behalf of all victims, actual or potential, of these weapons of mass destruction and terror.

As I was saying earlier, the Conference on Disarmament has already achieved encouraging progress, for which you should be commended, in the direction of an end to the nuclear arms race. But much remains to be done to achieve the objective of general and complete nuclear disarmament. Indeed, the content of the agenda which you adopted for the present session proves that amply, because four of the seven substantive items on it have to do in a general way directly or indirectly with these nuclear weapons. The process of nuclear disarmament must therefore continue. Considerable progress has been made at the bilateral level, that is clear, with the conclusion of the START I and START II treaties. Furthermore, the nuclear-weapon States have taken major unilateral steps in this area, and they should be encouraged to continue that effort. We therefore welcome the praiseworthy efforts made by these nuclear Powers, which we encourage of course to continue them unremittingly.

Nevertheless, my country, Senegal, remains deeply convinced that the Conference on Disarmament has a prominent role to play on this matter, and

(Mr. Niasse, Senegal)

that is why our country remains in favour of establishing, in the Conference, an ad hoc committee on cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament as it appears in the draft programme of work for the Conference presented by the G.21. That programme also includes the question of effective international arrangements to protect non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The conclusion of such arrangements is a requirement of fairness for the States which virtually unanimously decided voluntarily to renounce the acquisition of nuclear weapons by virtue of their accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Some of those countries, furthermore, did not simply limit themselves to acceding to that treaty; they have created in their own regions, in Latin America, in the Pacific and on the African continent, completely nuclear-weapon-free zones through the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba. Unilateral declarations by some nuclear Powers, by means of which they have committed themselves not to resort to the use or the threat of the use of nuclear weapons against States which do not have such weapons, have constituted an important step in the right direction - this fact must be stated and welcomed. But we have to go further. It must be possible to draw on those various declarations in order to prepare a legally binding instrument to provide us with the assurances we need for our own collective security. I therefore encourage the Conference on Disarmament to continue the efforts already begun in this area in order to find a common approach which can lead to progress in discussions on a problem the resolution of which remains essential for maintaining the authority of the non-proliferation regime.

Before concluding I would like to say a few words about the question of transparency in armaments, which also occupies a prominent place on your agenda. For us this is an important question which should be considered in close connection with that of the international transfer of armaments. These two questions in our view are closely linked, because transparency can make it possible to identify, at the regional and subregional levels in particular, situations involving an excessive build-up of military arsenals. This should in turn make it possible, in a process of preventive diplomacy or even conflict resolution, to minimize the level of arms transfers. It is obvious that weapons as such do not create conflicts. But the ease with which the protagonists in a conflict, potential or actual, can acquire them and accumulate them seriously and extensively contributes to sustaining and prolonging conflicts which otherwise might have been prevented or resolved in time. This is not a simple issue. We all recognize that. To make progress, the reluctance of many parties to make military expenditure more transparent will have to be overcome. It will also be necessary to tackle vested interests boldly, especially those involved in private markets for weapons. But the effort is justified by what is at stake: safeguarding the security of many of our countries. I therefore encourage the Conference on Disarmament, which in the past has already taken up major challenges, to persevere in the consideration of this important issue.

For several years now - more specifically, since the fall of the Berlin Wall - the entire international political structure has been in the process of transformation. Globally, and in that spirit, our world has become a little safer, but at the same time it has become more complex. In this

context, disarmament, which has long been considered a relatively distinct subject, must now be comprehended and integrated into the broader efforts being made at the international level to strengthen peace and international security. Disarmament, the organization of a new system of international relations and the promotion of economic and social progress should now be considered, in this context and within this framework, as complementary imperatives and priorities which must be satisfied in a coordinated and concerted manner. In this regard, it is a good thing that your Conference has invited new States to participate in the process of disarmament. It is certainly a way of promoting a more global and multidimensional approach. We welcome this and we encourage the new members to show perspicacity but especially imagination in order to contribute to the emergence and the establishment of this new approach which would interweave all the interdependent problems of disarmament, which are so closely related to those of peace, security and of course development.

The Conference on Disarmament can legitimately be proud of what it has already accomplished. Indeed, it has a bright future ahead of it, since what has still to be accomplished remains considerable. In that regard I can assure you that my country, Senegal, and its leader, President Diouf, will spare no effort to contribute to the accomplishment of that exciting task which still confronts you. In conclusion, Madam President, I would like to thank the Secretary-General of the Conference, the Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and the members of the secretariat for the wise assistance which they have always given you in the accomplishment of your task.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal for his important statement, and I would like to say how moved I was by the personal touch that he added to his compliments to the Chair. Thank you, Sir.

I now give the floor to the representative of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): Firstly, Madam President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency and wish you success in this demanding task. I assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation.

The Conference on Disarmament has spent several months discussing its future work. We may not have spent this time as efficiently as many, including Finland, would have hoped, but there is no doubt that the exchange of views has ben necessary and useful. Finland welcomes the concrete proposals presented by groups or individual delegations. All these proposals are valuable contributions to the discussion and will take our work forward. During this difficult period of the CD's work, the President of the Conference has had a central role. I would like to thank the Presidents for their tireless efforts and initiatives to keep the discussions focused and organized. Now it is time to move to decisions concerning substantive work. In order to start negotiations on some items, and possible preparatory work on

some others, a great amount of flexibility, as well as realism, is needed. It is our view that all decisions need not be taken at the same time. If we can reach consensus on one issue we should make that decision without delay and then proceed to discuss other issues.

Finland has very clearly indicated that it considers anti-personnel landmines (APLs) an urgent issue, one that should be addressed here in the CD. This is why Finland, together with the delegations of Chile and Poland, made the proposal of 27 March to appoint a special coordinator on APLs. I am pleased to see that APLs have become an important issue under discussion in this forum. The draft decision of 22 May on the appointment of a special coordinator on APLs was a result of intensive consultations which were conducted on the basis of the Australian proposal, CD/1458. I would like to thank Ambassador Campbell and the former President of the Conference, Ambassador Berdennikov, for their determined efforts to move the Conference forward on this question. I appeal to you, Madam President, as well as to the distinguished delegates, for the Conference to make the decision based on the draft of 22 May now. The special coordinator should be given the possibility to start his or her demanding task.

I would like to underline that the appointment of a special coordinator and the possible subsequent establishment of an ad hoc committee on APLs will by no means exclude other items from the work of the Conference. Finland is open to discussions on any other item on the agenda. Since there are only two weeks left of this part of the session, it is my view that intensive contacts and consultations are also necessary to reach agreement on the other items on our programme of work. Finland considers the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off convention another important item. This is an issue which has a negotiated mandate and it is thus ready for concrete work. The ban on the production of fissile material would be an important step forward in the process of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In addition to substantive items, there are some organizational matters that should be seriously addressed. The G-21 proposal of 5 June contains various interesting elements. As to the proposal to establish special coordinators on CD expansion and the agenda, as well as improved and effective functioning of the Conference, we deem this to be most appropriate and timely. It is the view of my Government that the Conference on Disarmament continues to have an important role to play in the strengthening of global security and stability. It is the task of the Conference itself to review its functioning and working methods in order to respond to the expectations of the international community, now and in the future. Since last July, the CD has an enlarged membership. The expansion of the CD means that the Conference is now more representative and more global. As we know, there are still countries outside the Conference wishing to contribute to its work as full members. The Conference should start deliberating the question of further expansion without further delay.

To conclude, let me add the following. The distinguished Ambassador of Australia presented, on 22 May, a proposal (CD/1458) containing a draft decision concerning the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel

(Mr. Reimaa, Finland)

landmines. Intensive consultations the same day resulted in a new compromise version that was distributed in all official languages. There was agreement that all delegations would send this version to their capitals for final instructions. As I have already mentioned, my delegation would like to proceed with this matter in this plenary today. Accordingly, I would like to request you to ask now if there is any objection to this draft decision.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Finland for his statement, and I have taken good note of the request he made to the Chair. There is a slight change in the list of speakers - I now call on the representative of Kenya, Ambassador Tolle.

Mrs. TOLLE (Kenya): Madam President, allow me at the outset, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of this august body, namely, the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation wishes to assure you of our continued support. Since this is the first time this year that I am addressing the CD plenary in my national capacity, I wish to convey my delegation's warm welcome to all colleagues who have joined us since January. I also wish to express my delegation's gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Berdennikov, for the able manner in which he guided our work.

We have all had the pleasure of listening to the statement delivered by the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal H.E. Mr. Moustapha Niasse, this morning, whose presence my delegation warmly welcomes. The fact that the Minister has found time to be with us today is not an accident. His statement is indeed timely and thought-provoking, especially coming soon after the Russian Foreign Minister, His Excellency Mr. Evgeny Primakov, delivered his statement at our plenary meeting last week. The wise and encouraging statements that they have made should enable us to revitalize our work.

As the single multilateral disarmament forum, the Conference on Disarmament has a crucial role to play in ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security. Among its recent notable achievements are the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force on 29 April 1997, and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Kenya deposited her instruments of ratification to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 25 April 1997, and is also a State signatory of the CTBT since 14 November 1996.

As a peace-loving country, Kenya attaches great importance to the maintenance of peace, which is critical to our national development. Kenya, however, views with concern the current inertia in the Conference that is characterized by its inability to agree on a programme of work for the present session at this late stage. The Russian Foreign Minister, in his statement before the Conference last week, aptly stated his delegation's readiness to "agree upon realistic priorities, and to harmonize positions constructively on the whole range of issues on the agenda of the Conference". It is imperative, therefore, that all members exercise political will, flexibility and understanding in order to arrive at an agreement that is acceptable to all.

(Mrs. Tolle, Kenya)

It is in this context that my delegation, in conjunction with the G.21, actively pursued and arrived at a common position on the issue, in our commitment to ensure that the Conference begins its work immediately. As regards the various issues contained in the programme of work, Kenya has consistently articulated its views both within the Conference and at the United Nations General Assembly. We appreciate the progress made in the field of nuclear disarmament with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the CTBT. Similarly, we acknowledge the recent developments made bilaterally by the United States and the Russian Federation on future reductions in nuclear forces, when the two Presidents met in Helsinki, Finland, in March this year. We note that they reaffirmed their commitment to take further concrete steps in this field. Unfortunately, however, we have observed that this move is not applicable to all nuclear-weapon States. We hope that all nuclear-weapon States will take the necessary steps to join the process. Kenya, for its part, sees no justification for the continued existence of nuclear weapons and is therefore committed to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament as contained in document CD/1388 of 14 March 1996.

Kenya is a State signatory of the NPT and the African Nulcear-Weapon-Free Zone (the Pelindaba Treaty) and has therefore renounced any possibility of ever acquiring nuclear weapons. In view of the fact that the General Assembly has consistently maintained that there is an urgent need to reach an early agreement on effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, the Conference should re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances to negotiate an international convention of a legally binding character to that effect. We hope that, in the process, the issue of the fissile material cut-off can be addressed in view of the positive measures that have already been taken by some countries.

The situation on the African continent concerning landmines is well known, with Africa accounting for over a third of the 110 million devices planted globally. According to the statistics of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 18 African countries are facing the scourge of mines today. While having only limited military utility, anti-personnel landmines prevent civilians from living in their homes and using their fields, thereby causing a serious threat to the development of those countries long after the conflict has ended. Moreover, the high cost involved in mine clearance only places an extra burden on the fragile economies of the countries primarily infested. The issues of mine clearance and victim assistance pertaining to the African continent need to be addressed urgently. It is against this background that my country participated in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) conference held in South Africa from 19 to 21 May 1997, in which African countries agreed to develop inter-African cooperation in mine clearance and victim assistance, and to encourage member States to become parties to relevant international instruments governing anti-personnel landmines, in addition to supporting and promoting efforts to achieve a global ban. This decision has been endorsed by the recent OAU summit meeting of African heads of State and Government convened in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 2 to 4 June this year. Let me conclude by stating that, in principle my delegation would have no difficulties with the appointment of a

(Mrs. Tolle, Kenya)

special coordinator to seek the views of members of the Conference on the issue of anti-personnel landmines, as long as there is consensus in the CD. Furthermore, this should be on the understanding that the role to be played by the CD on the matter complements other initiatives that are already at an advanced stage.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Kenya for her statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Mexico. I give him the floor.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, for the moment, I don't recall whether I have already officially taken the floor in a formal plenary presided over by you. I know that I have spoken under your presidency in this room, and that I have already conveyed my delegation's congratulations to you and assured you of our cooperation. But in case that has not appeared in the proceedings, I would like to place on record our pleasure at seeing you presiding over our work in an exemplary manner. I now come to what I was going to say.

As the Coordinator of the Group of 21 stated at our last plenary meeting, the Group continues to attach the highest priority to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament under agenda item 1. As then announced, I have the privilege of presenting a specific proposal on a mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament on behalf of the following 26 delegations members of the Conference on Disarmament and belonging to the Group of 21, namely: Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kenya, Mexico, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Senegal, Syrian Arab Republic, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. The mandate that the 26 countries are proposing for such an ad hoc committee reads as follows:

> "The Conference decides to establish an ad hoc committee under agenda item 1 on nuclear disarmament to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time.
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> "In discharging its function, the ad hoc committee will take into account the proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted by 28 members of the Conference belonging to the Group of 21 (CD/1419, 7 August 1996), as well as any other existing proposals and future initiatives in this regard.
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> "The ad hoc committee will establish working groups to negotiate, as a first step, a universal and legally binding multilateral agreement committing all States to the objective of complete elimination of nuclear weapons, an agreement on further steps required in a phased programme with time-frames leading to total elimination of nuclear weapons, and a convention on the prohibition of the production of

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

fissile material for nuclear weapons, and nuclear explosive devices, taking into account the report of the Special Coordinator on this item (CD/1299) and the views relating to the scope of the treaty.

"Working groups will report to the ad hoc committee on a regular basis or as necessary on the progress of their work. The ad hoc committee will report to the Conference on Disarmament on the progress of its work before the conclusion of the 1997 session."

On behalf of the co-sponsors of the proposed mandate that I have just read, I request that this proposal be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words which he reiterated to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the Ambassador of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Madam President, allow me to tell you how happy I am to see you presiding over our work. Your experience, your wisdom and the dignity with which you lead this Conference prompt respect and admiration. I would also like to thank Ambassador Berdennikov, who skilfully guided the work of this Conference for several weeks. I also wish to say how happy we were to hear the important statement delivered by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, who is a great friend of our country.

I did not intend to take the floor today, but I think that the Ambassador of Finland said something extremely important towards the end of his statement. I have in mind the paragraph that concerns deliberations on the expansion of this Conference. I think that he has raised an issue to which Morocco, and myself as its representative in the Conference, attach great significance. Consequently I would like to propose that, on the basis of the proposal made by the representative of Finland, we should devote one or more plenary meetings to the expansion of the Conference. We have consensus on the fact that the expansion of the Conference is important, we have consensus on the fact that we could have a special coordinator, but we have no one in any group who has come forward to do this job, which means that things are ripe but we need a trigger. I believe I feel personally involved, as a former President of the Conference who made a number of undertakings to countries which are not currently members of the Conference. I think that we should have some plenary meetings to discuss, above and beyond the principle that we want this Conference to be enlarged to reflect the international community, what kind of Conference we would like to have, to broaden the discussion a little; that might perhaps encourage our various groups within the CD to come forward and propose candidates for the expansion and thus work more positively.

So I will summarize my proposal. I would like you to arrange with your successor to have one or more plenary meetings during which we could discuss enlargement, in what I might call the broad sense of the term, in other words not restricting ourselves to saying yes or no to a given country, but to see

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

what sort of Conference we would like to have - whether it would be an open-ended Conference in which everyone would be accepted, or would it be a Conference that would be enlarged by 10 new members - in other words, all the questions that might be raised in this regard. This would give a little transparency vis-à-vis those who are at the back of the room and who, from time to time, do not fail to complain and come and see the delegations, particularly mine, since we played a rather modest role at the outset on this issue. So I would like you to arrange two or three meetings with your successor so that we can have a public debate which would enable us to provide a few basic ideas, first of all to these delegations that are waiting, and then among ourselves, and we might possibly have a special coordinator on whom everyone agrees.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Morocco, and so we take good note of his proposal. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil. I give the floor to Ambassador Saboia.

Mr. SABOIA (Brazil): Madam President, allow me first to address to you the congratulations of my delegation for your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and assure you of the full cooperation of the Brazilian delegation. I would like also to extend my delegation's gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation, for the excellent manner in which he conducted his duties as President of the Conference. I also would like to put on record the appreciaton of my delegation for the important statement given this morning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal.

Brazil has joined the large number of G.21 delegations in endorsing the draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament just introduced by the distinguished Ambassador of Mexico. Nuclear disarmament is a major concern of our time and a legitimate aspiration of the international community. It is incumbent upon the CD, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, to discharge its responsibilities in this regard. The call for the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the CD was recently renewed by the G.21 in document CD/1462, and has also enjoyed the support of other members of the Conference. The present draft mandate for an ad hoc committee reflects principled positions with regard to nuclear disarmament and to the responsibilities of the CD in this matter. It is consistent with General Assembly resolutions on nuclear disarmament, as well as with the request to the CD contained therein. It also reflects the view of the vast majority of States with regard to the priority that should be conferred upon the issue of nuclear disarmament.

Bearing in mind the points made above, the Brazilian delegation wishes to stress that, in its view, the draft mandate is put forward as a proposal to be discussed, and hopes it will be conducive to such discussions. Our support for the draft mandate should not be interpreted as placing a limitation on our willingness to continue to seek formulas which would facilitate reaching the objective of beginning negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the CD.

The PRESIDENT: (translated from French): I thank the representative of Brazil, Ambassador Saboia, for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of Chile, Ambassador Berguño.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I wish to say how happy we were to listen to all the words of His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, and especially those words of praise he addressed to you, Madam President, which were well deserved, sincere and I think reflected the thoughts of all of us. But I would like to refer to the significant fact that both that presentation and the presentation made by the distinguished delegate of Kenya reflect in a substantive manner the position of my country on the questions that our Conference should address, questions that are set forth in a programme of work agreed by the Group of 21. We have also heard the introduction of a proposed mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, and lastly we have heard an important proposal, with which I would like to associate myself very particularly, which is the proposal made by the distinguished Ambassador of Morocco, whose devotion to and concern for the cause of expansion we share, very especially the countries which very recently, like yours, Madam President, and ours, have been able to become members of the Conference on Disarmament, thanks to an action which found a response in the Conference and which we hope in the future will also find a response and open up the prospect of expansion but also open up, as Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi put it so well, comprehensive and full consideration of the issue of expansion in a transparent manner by the Conference.

My delegation has difficulty in understanding why we cannot perform any of these actions, why the question posed by the representative of Finland remains unanswered, why a coordinator for expansion cannot be appointed, why a coordinator for the functioning of the Conference cannot be appointed, why a coordinator for the agenda cannot be appointed, what is the reason for the fact that, having received not only majority support, but in some cases it is said that no delegation has difficulty with some of these issues, we remain completely deadlocked. We have rules of procedure; we have priorities; we have documents that are tabled and are not being considered.

I believe that a basic issue has been raised in Ambassador Reimaa's wise assessment - that each question must have an answer and that that order is laid down in our rules, which we must not manipulate, or extend, or prolong indefinitely. The time has come to reply to each of these questions. On anti-personnel landmines, we have heard a rather dramatic reference made in the statement of the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal and the representative of Kenya to the importance of the issue in some regions, and the importance of rapid and effective humanitarian action, but also I think that the significant reflection of these and other statements is that the issue is an issue of importance for the Conference on Disarmament and that we await a pronouncement in this regard.

(Mr. Berguño, Chile)

Concerning the proposed mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, my delegation would like to state here that we are also waiting for there to be a reaction on this subject and for this subject to be considered. My delegation is not in a position to subscribe to this particular mandate for a clear and precise reason - because on one of the subjects which are included in this mandate there is already an adopted mandate, which is the subject of cessation of the production of fissile material for warlike purposes. But the other one does not exist, and we would like it to exist as soon as possible. We would like it to be possible to discuss this matter, we would like not to be constantly confronted with a wall of silence, we would like to have negotiations on the subject. The President of my country, in 1958, I believe, answered a question raised by the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, and expressed his willingness to see the negotiation of a convention for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Time has passed and we cannot conduct these negotiations. The important thing is to take a step forward. The distinguished representative of Iran has made a proposal in this regard. This proposal, a minimal proposal, the proposal for a special coordinator for the topic, could not be accepted either. I would like to make an appeal for flexibility, for a breakthrough, for serious-mindedness in the consideration of these subjects. It is not possible to continue indefinitely playing a game of concealment. It is necessary for us to know whether we wish to work in this Conference on Disarmament for international disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Chile for that statement.

As I announced at the beginning of the present plenary meeting, I would now like to invite the Conference to take a decision on the request made by Côte d'Ivoire to participate as an observer in the work of the Conference for 1997. You have this request before you with a covering note from the President (CD/WP.487). May I assume that the Conference approves this request? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): As you know, intensive consultations are continuing on the draft decision of 22 May 1997 concerning the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines, as well as on the proposed programme of work suggested by the Group of 21 in document CD/1462. Without prejudice to the efforts that I wish to continue during my term of office on this subject, I intended to put to you a proposal to hold open-ended informal consultations immediately after this plenary meeting in order to continue the consideration of the proposals before us and try to secure a consensus. I intended to put this proposal to you in the light of the Presidential consultations held yesterday afternoon. But this morning, we heard an appeal from the representative of Finland, who would like the Conference to be able to take a decision on the proposal of 22 May for the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. Other

(The President)

voices have been raised to express the wish that the Conference should emerge at last from the inertia in which it seems to have been revelling since the beginning of our work.

It is now June, and we have not yet achieved anything. We have a host of proposals, as Ambassador Berguño has reminded us, which have remained unanswered. We have before us proposals made by various quarters, which have been put to the Conference, some of which seem to have been forgotten, while for others we cannot arrive at a consensus, even though many of us think that a solution is at hand. Therefore, I too would like to appeal to the Conference to be good enough to make up its mind to take a decision on one or other of the proposals before it, whether it be anti-personnel landmines, the programme of work, expansion of the Conference.

The Ambassador of Morocco has made a very interesting proposal. I am quite prepared to have as many plenary meetings as would suit the Conference in order to deal with this issue in all its aspects, but I think I need not remind you that when the question arose of having a special coordinator on this issue, we were not in a position to produce a candidate, and this question has remained pending up to now. So this is the appeal I wish to make to the Conference. We can continue the plenary, if the Conference so wishes, take a decision, whether it is on the 22 May document on anti-personnel mines, or on the programme of work which was circulated as early as 5 June, which all delegations said they were prepared to discuss. I am waiting for the Conference to tell me what it wants to do, and I hope that its common desire will be that we should be able to work and at last arrive at a result. The President is in the hands of the Conference.

I would like to give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. HERNANDEZ (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, first of all I should like to congratulate you for all the efforts you are making to try to get the Conference on Disarmament out of this deadlock, and also to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal for his excellent statement.

Madam, I think that you have been very clear in what you have just said: decisions are necessary. Here I would like to take a step backwards and refer to some of the points I heard in previous statements. Let us take the subject of expansion, on which I think my delegation can speak with some authority, because we have always been very active and fought for this to be able to materialize. We are in agreement - it is necessary to take a decision, perhaps it is necessary to appoint a coordinator, but what my delegation doesn't think will be easy for the members of this Conference to accept is that the only thing we would have to do would be to expand ourselves without being able to make use of the time to reach agreement on substantive issues. That is our priority. This does not mean that we cannot discuss the expansion issue, but there are other issues. We must show some responsibility in our work.

(Mr. Hernández, Argentina)

You have also referred, Madam, to the Group of 21 proposal, which my delegation is of course prepared to discuss. We see that work has been done that enabled the members of the Group to agree and we hope we are going to hold a number of meetings to discuss it which will lead to acceptance by members of other groups, or by different members of this Conference individually. I believe that in a certain respect, given the urgent need to take decisions, we are mixing everything up. I believe that today there has been a clear statement on an official request for the taking of a decision, put forward by the Ambassador of Finland. I believe that that official request, and I am certain of this, has been supported by Ambassador Berguño of Chile, and I believe that this very day, and in this formal meeting, we must take a decision on this matter. My delegation is ready to pursue the discussion of other subjects, but I wish to repeat that we would be grateful if the formal request for a decision at this formal plenary could be dealt with.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Madam President, allow me to begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to say that my country's delegation is very gratified to see you presiding over our proceedings. I would also like to say that my country's delegation is very happy to note the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, who made a statement before this Conference. That is additional proof of the importance which Senegal attaches to the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation was surprised to learn of the request of the Ambassador of Finland that a decision be taken at this meeting concerning the appointment of a special rapporteur/coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. We were surprised because the information that we received from the Coordinator of the Group of 21, following Presidential consultations yesterday afternoon, indicated the following:

(continued in English)

"The President was in a position to draw the following conclusions:

"(a) There is no consensus to take a decision in the plenary on the proposal submitted on 22 May 1997, regarding APLs;

"(b) There exists a proposal to have open-ended Presidential consultations on two items - the proposal dated 22 May 1997 and the proposal submitted by the G.21 (CD/1462). These two proposals are to be considered together with no order of priority;

"(c) There will be open-ended informal Presidential consultations tomorrow."

(continued in Arabic)

(Mr. Orfi, Syrian Arab Republic)

I believe, Madam President, that your assessment of the situation is correct. My delegation came to today's meeting on the basis of the conclusions submitted to us concerning the outcome of yesterday's Presidential consultations. On this basis, we have no objection to the holding of informal consultations immediately after this meeting.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Syria for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. The next speaker on my list is the representative of Malaysia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. AHMAD JAZRI (Malaysia): As this is the first time that I take the floor, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency. I also would like to extend my congratulations and thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Berdennikov, for the able manner in which he has conducted the business of the Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the point raised by the representative of Finland on the issue of expansion of membership. I also would like to put on record my appreciation to the Ambassadors of Morocco and Chile, and the others who have added their support, for urging the Conference to address this matter. We applied for membership a considerable time ago, and at the beginning of this 1997 session we brought our head of delegation, Ambassador Hasmy Agam, from New York to address this Conference, one of his main topics being expansion of membership. It is encouraging to note that the issue is coming into focus. I would like also to take this opportunity to call upon you to use your diplomatic skills to convince this Conference to begin deliberations without delay, so that those of us who are still awaiting consideration for membership may know our position: whether we must wait another year, another five years, whether we can start making preparations for full-fledged membership and participation in this very important body. I would also like to take this opportunty to urge the Conference to consider seriously the appointment of a special coordinator, somethig which was supposedly already agreed upon, but which has failed to materialize. If it is not too much to ask, and if there is no delegation willing to take that responsibility, I would like to call upon the President herself to assume that task.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Malaysia for his statement and the kind words addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): We have heard a discussion which is not going to take us anywhere and which we would have done better to conduct in informal consultations. Like other delegates, I received the report on yesterday's Presidential consultations, and I understand that you, Madam, had reached the conclusion that there is no consensus for taking a decision in the plenary on the 22 May proposal on anti-personnel landmines. That was a conclusion reached yesterday afternoon. I do not know what can have changed between yesterday afternoon and this morning, but if there was no consensus yesterday afternoon, my delegation is not aware of there being any

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

new element that would bring about consensus today for taking such a decision. If the conclusion was reached yesterday afternoon in the Presidential consultations that there should be open-ended informal consultations, both on the 22 May proposal and on the proposal presented by the Group of 21, which, by the way, also refers, in different terms, of course, to the appointment of a coordinator on the mines issue, I think we should proceed in that fashion. Nothing indicates that there has been a change.

My delegation, as you know, Madam President, is a delegation for which the mines issue is a very important issue. We promoted and are participating in the Ottawa Process; we are parties to the 1980 Convention; we are fostering the process of declaring the continent in which we are situated a continent free of anti-personnel mines. We think that these devices are by their very nature indiscriminate and we are determined to bring about their elimination from the face of the Earth. Therefore we share the concern of many delegations about the use, production and transfer of these mines and we invite the delegations which, with such apparent enthusiasm, want the Conference on Disarmament to embark immediately on an exercise of uncertain content and duration, to join the Ottawa Process, to bring about before the end of the year a total ban on the use, production and transfer of these slow-motion weapons of mass destruction. If these delegations, or some of them, are not in a position to accept such a total ban, we invite them to ratify the recently amended Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons, which at least imposes limitations on use and transfer, and would spare mankind a few innocent victims, and if they cannot either join the Ottawa Process or ratify the above-mentioned amended Protocol II, I invite them at least to ratify the 1980 Convention so that they will be able to participate in the review conference that is to be held shortly, very shortly, at which we will also be able to move forward in this area of conventional weapons that are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects. But above all, we invite them not to play to the gallery in this Conference in order to conceal the fact that they do not wish to do anything to find a solution and that what they are trying to do is thwart other processes that are under way.

Mr. HERNANDEZ (Argentina) (translated from Spanish): I merely wished to say that my delegation is not at all surprised that the Ambassador of Finland requested that a decision should be taken today. It is not surprised because we have been talking about this for weeks and months. What my delegation is surprised at is that we have not had the courage or bravery, or the required agreement, to take this decision. My delegation is very struck by the fact that there are countries which are obstructing work in this Conference on Disarmament. I cannot imagine why this is happening - my country cannot understand it. I am grateful for the invitations extended to me, invitations which have of course already been accepted. For my country the issue of anti-personnel mines is a high-priority matter, and it is participating in all the negotiations in all forums around the world - in other words, we do not need any more invitations. What we do not understand, once again, is why this Conference cannot take a decision now in a formal plenary. We do not consider that consensus is also needed for the President's prerogatives to be taken up. If we follow that path, we will also need consensus in order to see whether we

(Mr. Hernández, Argentina)

will or will not meet in plenary sessions. This is the path on which we are embarking. I would once again request that a formal decision should be taken at this plenary session, not for the public gallery but for ourselves, in order to shoulder our responsibilities in the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament.

Mr. SVOBODA (Czech Republic): My delegation fully supports the statement made by the distinguished delegate of Malaysia, and highly appreciates statements by the distinguished delegates of Finland, Morocco and Chile concerning the expansion of membership.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I really just wanted to make two comments. The first is that the record of the Presidential consultations which was quoted to us by the distinguished representative of Syria was of course the record, I assume, prepared by the G.21 representative at that meeting. I have personally always thought that we have a problem here, and that it would be much better if the record of Presidential consultations was prepared by the secretariat. When I have proposed that before, the distinguished Deputy Secretary-General did not thank me, and I understand that it would be a difficult task, but at least we would all then have the same record. Because, quite frankly, the record that has been quoted to us - and I don't doubt for a second that it was the honest record of one of the participants at that meeting - is not the same as the record which some others of us were given. So I think it is very difficult, and this is something which one ought to look at, perhaps, when we get down to considering the improved and effective functioning of the Conference. But my main point, really, is to suggest that it would be very dangerous to accept the argument that you, President, cannot put a question to the Conference without there being consensus to permit you to put the question. In the view of my delegation, that just cannot be right. We do not believe that any international body works in that way, and we think it would be a recipe for ensuring that the CD grinds to a complete halt. Of course, any delegation has the right to object to the substance of a proposal when it is put, but it does not seem right to me that any delegation can argue that the question should not be put. I really do believe that if we allow that situation to be created, we will never find a way out of our current impasse. Therefore, I would strongly support the request of the distinguished Ambassador of Finland, supported by the distinguished representative of Argentina, that you should simply ask whether there is any objection to the proposal to appoint a special coordinator on the issue of APLs in the terms that resulted from the negotiations and consultations chaired by your distinguished predecessor.

Ms. ANDERSON (Ireland): In coming into the room this morning, I frankly had no intention of seeking the floor, and I would speak very briefly and informally on the single issue of expansion of membership. It had some prominence in the interventions of some speakers this morning, and I thank those who have drawn attention to the issue. I really do want to register, as strongly as I can, an appeal that there be some movement in this area. I genuinely feel that my delegation and, indeed, many others have shown extraordinary patience on this issue. In our case, we have been an applicant for 15 years to join the Conference on Disarmament. We have come back to the subject from time to time in this room, informally and formally. We have, frankly, not wanted to bring it up too relentlessly, too often, because we

(Ms. Anderson, Ireland)

know that there are so many really important issues of substance, in addition to the expansion issue, that this Conference must address, and I can only say that I empathized totally with the kind of appeal that you made to the Conference this morning for substantive work to begin. We know there are a number of areas, whether they be cut-off or landmines or nuclear disarmament, where there is a huge importance to initiate substantive work. For that reason, as I said, we have not wanted to be raising our voice too frequently, too relentlessly, in pursuit of the expansion issue. But I do say, in all honesty, our patience is really frayed at this stage. Remember a year ago last June, we had the Group of 23 join and we were happy to see them join. We were encouraged by the statements which we took, and still believe, to have been genuine at that stage, statements of very many delegations that this was not the end of the discussion of the expansion issue, that there really was a "good faith" commitment to other applicants to keep the issue under review and to move matters forward. We were encouraged then, but it is 12 months ago.

At the beginning of this year, at our first session I believe, we heard the President say that there was consensus on the appointment of a special coordinator on the expansion issue, and the issue then became to identify the individual who would undertake this task, and all sorts of commitments were given to groups that it would not prejudice the chances of that group having a coordinator on another issue that perhaps might matter more to the group. So, I mean, it really has been something of a spectacle that there has been a kind of "pass the parcel" on this where it seems that not a single individual within the CD is willing to undertake the task of coordinator. Perhaps I have misunderstood. It is not always easy as an observer here to understand exactly what is going on in all of the discussions. But that is the message that has been conveyed to us on the waiting list: that nobody is willing to undertake the job. What kind of message does that give to us, who have been waiting so long, to our capitals, to many of us who really would like to make a contribution as members of the CD?

So, we have heard the idea that there should be a special focus on this in plenaries. There is the coordinator question out there, and any mechanism, it seems to me, is better than no mechanism at all. We have seven more applicants, I think, since we last gave any time to this. The one mechanism that I might register a slight hesitation about is the proposal that was made by our colleague from Malaysia, who I know would speak from exactly the same perspective as us and with the same sense of impatience, but with the idea that it should be the President who would undertake the task of coming up with a recommendation. If I thought that would lead to a concrete result, I would be entirely supportive of it. But I just have - and of course, it is no question of the abilities of any individual President - but I have memories, since arriving here in Geneva, for two years of addressing each President, each President trying to make a "good faith" attempt to move things forward, but it needs the more sustained, longer-term perhaps, attention of a coordinator, it seems to me. So, in brief, any mechanism that is likely to lead to early and concrete results - and I acknowledge again as I did at the outset that there are many issues of enormous substantive importance on the agenda of this Conference - we do not want in any way to distract from progress on those issues - but let us have progress in parallel on this issue of expansion, please.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Ireland for her statement. I still have nine speakers on my list: Turkey, China, Myanmar, Chile, Mexico, India, the United States of America, the Netherlands and Poland. I will therefore give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. KESKINTEPE (Turkey): Madam President, since my Ambassador had the opportunity to express his congratulations to you upon your assumption of the presidency at the last plenary, I shall confine my statement to our present discussion.

I should like to express my delegation's appreciation to the G.21 for their proposal on the CD programme of work as contained in document CD/1462. We also welcome the proposal on a mandate for the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We will give serious consideration to this proposal. My delegation has noted the statements made last week by some members of the G.21 to the effect that a lot of hard work had gone into the document on the work programme and that it had been a genuine effort in search of finding common ground so that the CD could break the impasse that it has found itself in. We have carefully studied the proposal in its entirety. While all items in the proposal may not command consensus in the CD, we have ascertained elements which could be isolated and used as the basis for taking other decisions, the sum of which could constitute our work programme in the remaining part of this year.

My delegation supports the establishment of ad hoc committees on negative security assurances, outer space and transparency in armaments, as well as the establishment of an ad hoc committee on cut-off. We can also go along with decisions to appoint special coordinators on the expansion of the Conference and the CD agenda and its improved and effective functioning. However, in our view, we should first take those decisions which are ripe. We have in mind the draft decision of 22 May 1997 on the appointment of a special coordinator on APLs. It deserves our immediate attention. This is all the more so in the light of the statements of some of the previous speakers. If we can successfully take this decision now at this plenary, we could then move on to take decisions on other proposals. My delegation therefore adds its voice to the request that the distinguished Ambassador of Finland has made which was supported by other delegations.

Mr. WANG (China) (translated from Chinese): Madam President, I would like to reserve an opportunity for my Ambassador to express his congratulations to you on a formal occasion.

The Chinese delegation is glad to have attended the Presidential consultations with group coordinators yesterday afternoon. As I was personally involved in these consultations, I would like to testify that the summarization by the President after yesterday afternoon's consultations, as retold by the Syrian Representative is accurate. I could even say that it is verbatim. I could further say that, although the Syrian version of the President's summary might have been drafted by the Coordinator of the Group of 21, all these points are accurate. I can assure you that, as far as the accuracy of the President's summary is concerned, we had no time to compare notes with the Group of 21. I further want to add that during the consultations held yesterday afternoon one group clearly said on a number of

(Mr. Wang, China)

occasions that it agreed to discuss the G.21 proposal on the work programme. Another group mentioned that only when the CD has reached a decision on the issue of appointing a coordinator for landmines can it consider discussing the G.21's proposal.

Secondly, the President actually raised two questions: whether or not we should take a decision on taking immediate action on the issue of appointing a coordinator for landmines, or whether, as suggested by you yesterday afternoon, Madam, we should proceed to informal consultation after the conclusion of the formal plenary. With regard to these two different questions, we have not actually reached a single answer. In other words, some countries prefer an immediate decision on the coordinator for landmines, but others prefer informal consultations. In any case, yesterday afternoon's Presidential consultations and this morning's discussion all demonstrate that at this stage with regard to the issue of appointing a coordinator for landmines there is still no consensus within the CD.

The Ambassador of Chile just reminded us that the rules of procedure of the CD should be respected. The Chinese delegation endorses his view completely. One of the most important rules of procedure of the CD is that only on the basis of consensus can a decision be made. As we are still short of a consensus, in order to speed up our work, the Chinese delegation agrees to the President's proposal that we conclude our plenary session now and go into informal consultation immediately to discuss the proposal by the G.21 on the work programme and the draft decision on the coordinator for landmines. The Chinese delegation will take part in the discussion in good faith during the informal consultations.

Mr. AYE (Myanmar): Madam President, may I first express my gratitude again to you for the excellent work that you have been undertaking on behalf of our Conference? My thanks also go to your predecessor, Ambassador Berdennikov, who had guided us so ably during his term of office. I would also like to express deep appreciation for the important statement delivered by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Senegal this morning.

I would now like to speak as Coordinator of the Group of 21. I recall that yesterday, in the Presidential consultations, I had referred to the proposal of the G.21 contained in document CD/1462 that had been tabled in the plenary on 5 June, and also mentioned earlier by you, on the programme of work for the CD in 1997. I recall that in subsequent consultations many delegations had welcomed the tabling of this proposal as a useful undertaking to help move forward the work of the CD. I also recall that I emphasized that the Group continues to attach the highest priority to the issue of nuclear disarmament. The position of the G.21 is that there is, as yet, no consensus in the CD on ways and means to deal with issues pertaining to various items on the agenda. Accordingly, the G.21 would like to request you to continue your consultations and endeavours to find a basis for consensus. I also recall that, following extensive exchanges of views, you are finally in a position to draw conclusions, as earlier mentioned by the distinguished delegate of the Syrian Arab Republic. To again recount: the first point, that there is no consensus to take a decision in the plenary on the proposal submitted on

(Mr. Aye, Myanmar)

22 May 1997 regarding APLs; the second point, that there exists a proposal to have open-ended Presidential consultations on two points, that is, the proposal of 22 May and the proposal submitted by the G.21, that is, CD/1462, and that these two proposals were to be considered together with no order of priority; and the third point, that there would be open-ended informal Presidential consultations today. There seems to have been some confusion as to what decision the President had taken in this regard. I must apologize for my presentation to the G.21 of the conclusions of the President in a manner, perhaps, that the English was not very fluent, or that the expression in English of my understanding of the conclusions of the President was not adequate. I apologize for that, English not being my national language. But to set matters straight, we would be grateful if you yourself, if possible, would reiterate what had been decided in your Presidential conclusions. In this regard, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the delegate of the People's Republic of China, who confirmed the accuracy of the points that I presented, as Coordinator of the G.21, to my Group. There has been a proposal that perhaps the secretariat, to prevent any confusion in the future, write up the Presidential consultations and, on behalf of the Myanmar delegation, I would welcome this proposal.

Mr. BERGUÑO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): I wish to say very briefly and very much by the way in relation to the statement of my distinguished friend the Ambassador of Mexico that I do not think that we countries which are insisting that the issue of anti-personnel mines should be dealt with in the Conference on Disarmament are trying to thwart the Ottawa Process. We think that all the constructive efforts that are made to put an end to this scourge should be welcomed by the international community. With regard to the important points of procedure that have arisen as a result of the statement of the representative of the United Kingdom, I would like to express appreciation for the explanation that I have heard from the representatives of Syria, China and Myanmar, and at the same time to voice my keen concern at the content of the conclusions and the fact that the content of the conclusions does not tally with the description made of the consultations and the positions of the groups.

If the three groups reached the conclusion that both the 22 May 1997 proposal and the proposal made by our Group of 21 (CD/1462) should be considered jointly and with no order of priority, if that was your conclusion, Madam President, your ruling, my delegation will certainly respect it, but will do so under protest, because this approach distorts the understanding with which we have been participating, and we have been participating actively, in the preparation and approval of the programme of work that is contained in document CD/1462. A basic element of the adoption of the programme of work is that it should not be used nor be able to be used to obstruct the work of this Conference, nor to thwart progress on proposals that have already been touched upon. When I referred to our rules of procedure, I also referred of course to those elements relating to priority which exist and which we should normally abide by. So that the consideration of two proposals, a broad proposal that is the framework in which we would like to place all subjects, including the question of anti-personnel mines, and the proposal of 22 May 1997, which predates it, should follow the rules of

(Mr. Berguño, Chile)

procedure, and the reaction that I wished to provoke was unfortunately mistaken or wrong, because if that is your conclusion, Madam, and if the three groups accepted something that my delegation obviously cannot accept because it thinks that it runs counter to our methods and standards of procedure, my delegation would like to protest. I would like to protest at the fact that in this way we are going to continue to keep the Conference on Disarmament out of work, and we think it is legitimate, and we say this again, to continue raising questions, not just on anti-personnel landmines, also on the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, also on expansion, also on all the issues, and we do not think, and we say this again, with the objection we had from one delegation that thought we were proposing this, that it is a question of dissolving the groups: the groups are very important, and we all have confidence in our coordinators, and we all trust in your discretion, Madam, your knowledge and your skill in resolving this issue, but the rules must be clear and transparent. And my delegation has great difficulty in accepting this because it runs counter to the way the programme of work was accepted in the Group of 21, on the understanding that it would not be used to obstruct any proposal, and while I understand that the representative of Myanmar should say that his language is not English, and it is not mine either, what I understand, what seems to me to stem from this, is that we are saying that in these consultations we can deal with the two issues in an undifferentiated way, with no order or priority, and that is difficult for me to accept. If this is your ruling, Madam, my delegation will of course respect it, but, as I said, it will do so under protest.

Ms. GHOSE (India): Madam President, since I have already congratulated you in my statement last week, or whenever it was, I am not going to repeat that. In any case I think you are assured of my delegation's cooperation.

I would like to make two points. The first is the issue of expansion of membership of the CD. May I suggest, if that is acceptable, that you consult, and within a week appoint a Friend of the Chair to deal with the issue of expansion? I would have to immediately disqualify myself since I will be leaving town. I think that it is time, and we have heard at least two of our colleagues - well, more, three or four colleagues - who are very rightly extremely annoyed with the way in which we are proceeding on this issue. So my proposal is, as a slight modification of the Malaysian proposal, that you take one week and appoint a Friend of the Chair, who will act as a special coordinator on the issue of expansion.

The second is, because our position on the issue of the programme of work is contained in the G-21 position, our position on the Australian proposal is also known, but I do not think it is going to serve any purpose by our going round and round. I would like to propose - because the G-21 proposal as I understand it was in fact an amendment to the Australian proposal, but I am not going into that - can I just suggest that you conduct consultations on how best we can find a basis for consensus on these two proposals through informal consultations? Now, we have gone through six months of trying open-ended consultations of various kinds. I have no problem with it. We can do them in open-ended consultations. We can do them in this room. We can do them in the next room. Or you could do them in groups - as

(Ms. Ghose, India)

you wish. But I think informal consultations to try and find a formula which may form the basis of a consensus would be the only way forward at the moment. I do not think that we are doing our Conference any service by carrying on in the way in which we are. We have to in fact leave to you as the President, and say that you would come back and report to the plenary next Thursday on what the results of these consultations have been. We will take it from there. But I think that to put in a week of intensive informal consultations to try and find a formula which may form the basis of a consensus I think is the only way forward.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of India for her various proposals, of which I have taken good note. I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Madam President, as this is the first time I have taken the floor in formal plenary under your presidency, allow me to extend the congratulations of my delegation that the progression of the alphabet has put you in the Chair at this important juncture in our work. I should also like to offer you the assurances and support of my delegation.

We have heard many times over the past several weeks in formal and informal consultations of the description that there is no consensus on one or another issue. We have also heard pointed calls for transparency in this forum. Unfortunately, the phrase "no consensus" is not a transparent phrase, and it does not really offer us the tools that we would need to move forward. Looking at the progression of the calendar, today is already 12 June. The delegation of Finland has asked that a decision be taken today on the so-called 22 May proposal, contained in document CD/1458, as modified by all of us in informal consultations, and now available in all languages.

Regarding yesterday's Presidential consultations, or any other Presidential consultations, I would like to note that these forums are not decision-making forums. They are really devices to help the President on how to conduct the formal meetings. The plenary is the decision-making body. It seems to my delegation that no conclusions reached in informal Presidential consultations can bind us in this setting, the formal decision-making body of the Conference. So, with an appeal for transparency, and with an appeal for the desire to take decisions and to know where we stand, I would like to support the proposal that we take a decision today on the document contained in CD/1458, as revised by us in informal consultations.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America for her statement and for the words addressed to the Chair. I now invite the representative of the Netherlands to take the floor.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): May I join others in congratulating you, Madam President, on taking upon your shoulders the indeed heavy responsibilities of the presidency of the Conference? May I also express the appreciation of my delegation on the thoughtful statement made by the Foreign

(Mr. Ramaker, Netherlands)

Minister of your country, His Excellency Mr. Moustapha Niasse? Like others, finally, I would like to thank your predecessor in the Chair of this Conference, Ambassador Berdennikov, for taking the initiative which has led us to the core of our discussion this morning, namely, the decision that should be taken on the proposal made by our distinguished colleague from Finland.

For some time already, the Netherlands has been concerned about the situation in this Conference, where there does not seem to be any progress towards the assumption of concrete work. Now, on the other hand, we had more or less expected that the Conference would go into a difficult year, a year of reorientation of what it was that it could do, and what it was that it could not do, in the wake of the conclusion of the negotiations on a major issue last year, the comprehensive test ban. But in the last few weeks, and today in particular, I should say that the concern of my delegation has become more profound in nature. It is not so much the fact that we are not working in a concrete manner, but it is rather the fact that we seem - I hope it is only that we seem - to be confused on how we should get to our decision-making. Already for a few months - and I think that it is wise to recall the presidencies of your Romanian and your Russian predecessors - there seems to be a tendency to, as it were, diminish the importance of the role of the President in the CD. I remember vividly that here in this room the necessity was evoked that one should consult and reach consensus, then, subsequently, on how to consult on our so-called work programme. Today, we hear that apparently there was no consensus on whether there was a consensus - it becomes complicated. There was a consensus yesterday that you concluded there was no consensus on how to establish consensus on the proposal made by Finland. I hear some laughing, but I think the situation is very, very serious if we go on on that path, if really we first have to reach consensus on how to establish consensus, on how to make a decision. It seems to me that those who plead for that are taking the seat of the President of the Conference, and I think if that is a path to follow, then I must say that I take a rather dim view of the future of this Conference. So, like others, I have no problem in accepting that on the substance we need consensus, but it would be rather difficult for my delegation to accept the thesis that the question on how to run the Conference is also subject to consensus. Therefore, I think that on these issues it is not you who are in the hands of the Conference but rather the Conference which is in your hands, and I think that here I tend to agree with the last speaker before the United States, the Ambassador of India, that indeed there is a heavy responsibility for you, so there is indeed an enormous task for the President. It does not mean that we underestimate the difficulties, but I think we should make a couple of fundamental distinctions, all of us here, if we want really to move forward. So, I think, like others, that we should be careful to preserve the prerogatives of the President of the CD. We should be careful and be aware that the President has his or her own responsibilities, and I am sure that if these premises are kept in mind, in the end we will reach a solution.

Mr. PA[illegible] (Poland): Madam President, the Polish delegation has already had the opportunity to express to you its congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference.

(Mr. Pa[illegible], Poland)

As a representative of the third co-sponsor of the proposal of 27 March to appoint a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines (CD/1452), I should like to echo the statements made today and questions asked in that regard by the distinguished representatives of Finland, Chile, the United Kingdom and, in fact, by so many others. Why should we not take a decision in this respect now? The tripartite proposal has led to considerable discussion and in fact an important meeting of minds. As a result, a language was agreed ad referendum on 22 May. Why can we not refer to instructions which we said we had to seek and by now must have received in that matter? Why, on the basis of these instructions, can we not take an appropriate decision now, one way or another? Consensus or lack of consensus must be established here and now, around this conference table. We cannot hide behind group positions and decisions taken elsewhere.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): I see that the dialogue of the deaf is continuing. I do not want to participate in it; I would simply like to revert to my initial proposal and ask you whether it would be possible - this would perhaps be one of the first decisions to be taken today - to decide that before the end of your presidency, we would devote the plenary meeting on 26 June to the expansion of the Conference so that all delegations can make statements and clarify their positions. I share the view of Ambassador Ghose that perhaps we should find a Friend of the Chair, but if you haven't found a special coordinator I doubt that you will find a Friend of the Chair. I think that if we can't find one, it's because there are certainly reasons, and real reasons, and simply discussing these questions in plenary will make it possible to clarify the various positions and perhaps see the outlines of the prospects for certain common points which might persuade many in the Conference, first to take a greater interest in this question, which is important and which we have all undertaken to pursue, and also to make it possible to appoint a special coordinator as an instrument of the CD, to work.

I think we have to make a practical proposal. I therefore propose that Thursday 26 June should be devoted to the expansion of the Conference and that everybody should prepare for that. I did not propose next week because this is an important subject, and we have to be able to consult our capitals and come prepared. This will enable those who have been waiting for 15 years to get an idea of problems and prospects. In this way the Conference will meet its commitments because this is a commitment entered into by the Conference to have a first stage in June 1996 when accepting the 23 States and consider all the other candidatures arising subsequently. I would like a decision to be taken before the end of this meeting to see whether everyone is prepared to examine a question of the greatest interest to us, because this Conference must be representative of the international community. I think that many delegations of observer countries deserve to be full members of the Conference and perhaps this would enable the Conference to better discuss some questions and perhaps to better reflect the desires of the international community. So, to sum up, my proposal is that a plenary meeting should be held on Thursday 26 June devoted to this issue and that we should prepare to make statements which would clarify our concept of expansion beyond the present number.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Morocco. I will of course ask the Conference what should be done with this very specific proposal which you have just made, to devote the plenary on 26 June 1997 to the question of the expansion of the Conference. I give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Madam President, I wish to be associated with the greetings extended to you earlier on taking the Chair and leading our difficult discussions. Also to the outgoing President for the work he has done, and the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, who paid us the honour of listening to his ideas, his thoughts, in his statement today.

For weeks now we have been hearing about the deadlock in the work of the Conference, and we wonder whether we are deadlocked or whether we have spent all this time groping blindly about in the dark. We see how many proposals of all sorts have been made, and the problem is that we have not carried out the exercise of formulating our plan of work, which is stipulated in the rules of procedure of this Conference. It is as if we tried to build a house without having drawn up plans and began to discuss how to make the roof, whether making the terrace will not cause problems, and whether we are going to start with the terrace or whether we should deal with the windows first of all.

The rules of procedure of the Conference are very clear when they state in paragraphs 27 and 28 that at the beginning of each session the Conference shall adopt its agenda for the year and that on the basis of its agenda, the Conference, at the beginning of its session, shall establish its programme of work, which will include the schedule of its activities for that session. We have seen that many proposals have prevented us from genuinely succeeding in carrying out that exercise, which we regard as essential to know in which direction we are heading. References are made to transparency, and we constantly use the expression, which has already become something of a cliché, but we see that many proposals can be seen as smokescreens, and we all know that smoke is not transparent, in fact it prevents you from clearly seeing the essence of things.

The Group of 21 submitted a proposal in an attempt to break out of the deadlock that has been created, but I think that the best thing would be if we could really draft the programme and if everyone said exactly, and with transparency, what he or she wants discussed in the programme and what the Conference should not discuss, and if we do not keep beating about the bush but clearly indicate the positions of each of our countries in relation to the issues that this Conference has to deal with. The Ambassador of Chile said that there are questions in the air. I am wondering what is happening with the proposal on the programme of work, what is happening with the subject of nuclear disarmament. I think the Group of 21 has offered its flexibility, it has produced a proposal designed to help us emerge from the deadlock, but ultimately we think that there is a need for the consultations that have been referred to for so long here, and we must move on to this other matter so that we can see whether we can really stop groping about blindly, and above all I think that the issue of the programme could help to guide the work that lies ahead of us, which is a much shorter period every day and which therefore obliges us to discharge our responsibility as soon as possible.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia): Let me add Australia's voice to the chorus of delegations who are now supporting the proposal put forward by Finland earlier this morning that we take a decision today in this plenary on the 22 May draft decision that would have approved the appointment of a special coordinator to examine what action the CD can take forward on landmines. As the initiator of the proposal that led to the language known as the 22 May text, we believe we have had more than adequate time to obtain instructions, more than adequate time to discuss the proposal, and should now move to take a decision on the issue. If there is truly no consensus, then let us see where the problem lies. Let the process at least be transparent. I have to say I fully share the apprehensions of Sir Michael Weston and Ambassador Ramaker that if delegations here try to prevent you from formally seeking the views of the membership on the proposal if so requested, if members cannot stand up and be counted on this issue, then the ramifications for the CD are dire indeed. I urge you to put the question before the close of today's plenary.

Mr. SEIBERT (Germany): Madam President, may I first congratulate you on your assumption of this important and responsible task of President of this Conference and at the same time assure you of our full support? We are also very happy to have listened today to the remarkable statement by His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, Moustapha Niasse.

Now, returning to our concrete work here, we have heard this morning a proposal by the distinguished representative of Finland and many other delegations asking for a decision on a text which has been on our table for more than three weeks and which originally emerged from an Australian proposal, but in whose discussion we have all participated and which was distributed to us with the remark that it might have a potential for consensus. Now in the meantime we have all sought instructions from capitals, and my capital keeps asking me what is happening with this text. Now I hear that we are not able to take a decision here because an informal body has established that there would be no consensus to take a decision on the consensus. Clearly, if that were accepted, our Conference would be in a serious crisis. It is clear that the Conference on Disarmament works on the basis of consensus. But the consensus must be established here in this room in the plenary. It cannot be transferred outside. Any attempt to transfer the decision-making outside of this Conference would be a serious infringement on the responsibilities of the President. Clearly you are free, Madam, to ask and to establish whether a consensus exists on any specific issue, and clearly any delegation is free to say it can accept the consensus or whether it has objections, but we cannot relieve and transfer the responsibilities outside of this Conference, and we would therefore encourage you and urge you to ask the question whether there is consensus on the paper of 22 May.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Germany for his statement and the words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): I apologize for taking the floor again. It is due to the need to make two points of clarification. The first: when I referred to the fact that there are some delegations that want to introduce the subject of mines in the Conference so that no progress

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

is made on mines, I was not of course referring to all the delegations which want the subject in this forum, still less was I referring to those which have displayed a will to arrive at concrete conclusions by participating in the forums that my delegation considers appropriate for bringing about the total bans for which we hope. That is the first point of clarification, a necessary point of clarification in view of the fact that there are other delegations which, of course, and we all know this, do not want to make progress in the field of mines and for that reason want to bring it to disarmament, and other delegations which are also extremely bothered by the Ottawa Process and the very existence of the 1980 Convention.

Having said this, I think there has been some confusion here today. Obviously every member of this Conference has the right to make proposals, and nobody can be denied that right. Obviously every member has the right to have his or her proposal considered, and obviously the President has the right to ask whether there are objections to a given proposal. Nobody denies that. But our usual method of work is that decisions are submitted to the Conference when there is a negotiated consensus. When there is no consensus, there is no point submitting to the Conference something which we know the Conference will not be able to adopt. Is it as simple as that. What has happened with the mines issue? From my delegation's point of view, we have said time and again, and in plenary we have set forth our reasons, which we consider well founded, that we are not convinced that this is the appropriate forum for dealing with the mines issue. However, we are a flexible delegation, as everyone knows, and we have said that we would have no difficulty with the appointment of a special coordinator, if there is a consensus to do so, in accordance with the terms and within the context of the programme proposed by the G.21. What does this mean? This means that we would oppose a decision being adopted on the basis of the 22 May text. We have objections regarding its wording, we have objections regarding the context, and if that proposal is put to the Conference, we will say no. If, as the representative of Finland said, you want the President to ask me again, I will say again to the President: 22 May - no. My delegation does not hide behind groups, Madam.

Ms. GHOSE (India): I am sorry to take the floor again. I have already made my two proposals on the expansion of the membership of the CD and on the issue of landmines. While I have no problems with the Ambassador of Morocco's proposal to discuss the issue of expansion at a plenary meeting on 26 June, I still continue to believe that you should be authorized by the CD to appoint a Friend of the Chair on expansion if we are going to be really serious on this issue. A Friend of the Chair is a less voluntary capacity than a special coordinator. Part of the problem that we have faced is that nobody has volunteered to be a special coordinator, whereas a Friend of the Chair can be dragooned as it were into a particular job, and I think that with your persuasive powers, I am sure you will be able to pursue a "somebody-to-do-this-job" within a week.

On the issue of landmines, I sincerely believe that it is not a question of standing up and being counted. I do not think that anybody in this Conference believes that my delegation has a problem with standing up and being counted. I do not think that is the problem. But as the Ambassador of

(Ms. Ghose, India)

Mexico said, normally in the formal plenary we come to a decision, not even by a hidden method of voting, but when we have already tried and found some basis for a consensus, which is why I feel that in the next week, starting from today, you could consult with groups on a formula which could be the basis for a consensus.

But the reason I take the floor is, even though the distinguished Ambassador of the Netherlands agreed with my confusion, that he said something where I have to disagree with him in the introductory portion, and for the record. Because this is a formal plenary I would like to put this on record, because this is a particular charge which has been brought against the Group of 21. I have no authority to speak on behalf of the Group of 21, but as a member of the Group of 21, I would like to say that at no point did the Group of 21 place any restrictions on the actions of the President of the CD, and I would like to read out - because this was a formal proposal of the Group of 21 made at the Presidential consultations, which I consider to be very useful, informal though they may be - and this is exactly what the G-21 said: "The G-21 wishes to assure the President that any Presidential statement containing assessments of the issues pertaining to the CD will not be challenged if previously consulted and a consensus is achieved.".

In any multilateral forum, the President represents the entirety of the forum of which he or she is the President, so it is normal that before the President makes such a Presidential statement, everybody is consulted. I want to make it very clear for the record, so that five years down the line anybody reading the document which contains the verbatim record of these discussions will know that there was no "gag order" on the President by the G-21.

Mr. SUN (Republic of Korea): First of all, Madam President, I would like to join other delegations in extending to you my congratulations on the assumption of the presidency and also to express my appreciation of the outstanding speech delivered by His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Senegal. I also thank the former President, Ambassador Berdennikov, for his honest efforts during his presidency.

On the question of informal consultations, my delegation is of the view that the convening of informal Presidential consultations belongs to the President in accordance with the provisions of the rules of procedure, which were adopted a long time ago. And during the period of my presidency earlier this year, I did convene several rounds of informal Presidential consultations in accordance with the rules of procedure.

As to the Presidential consultations which took place yesterday afternoon, I do not want to comment on the confusion surrounding their outcome, but as somebody has already said, the Presidential consultation is not a decision-making body. As one of the participants in such Presidential consultations, I am of the view that after taking the views of the participants, it is up to the President to choose the right course of action in carrying out the plenary and other meetings. So the absence or presence of a convergence of views among the participants, or whatever you may call the consensus, does not prevent any individual member of the CD from making any

(Mr. Sun, Republic of Korea)

request to the President. So in this sense, I am of the view that the distinguished delegate of Finland, Ambassador Reimaa, has every right to make a request to the President to put a question as to whether there is any objection to the 22 May draft decision on APLs which has been discussed for a long time. For its part, the delegation of Korea fully supports the request made by Ambassador Reimaa of Finland in this regard.

Mrs. KUROKOCHI (Japan): Madam President, I begin by congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference, and certainly I pledge the wholehearted cooperation of my delegation. I would also like to join my voice to those who express appreciation for the very important statement made by the Foreign Minister of Senegal.

I should like to limit my remarks to the question of anti-personnel landmines. I think we have already considered this draft decision long enough, and after a very thorough examination, we have come up with a text on which all of us have sought instructions from our Governments, and I do think that this particular draft proposal is ripe for decision. So the right question to be asked now for you is whether there is any objection to this draft decision. I do share the concern expressed by previous speakers that the absence of so-called consensus, the steps to be taken beforehand, should not prevent the decision from being taken by the Conference at the plenary. So I do appeal to you that we proceed as soon as possible to the decision-making in the plenary.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Japan I have taken good note of her appeal. I give the floor to the Ambassador of France.

Mrs. BOURGOIS (France) (translated from French): Madam President, allow me to extend my congratulations to you on Senegal's accession to the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I should also like to express the great interest with which my delegation listened to the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of your country tracing for the benefit of this Conference a programme of action which is both ambitious and pragmatic and in which he also mentioned, inter alia, the possible appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines.

Madam President, you are occupying this post of great responsibility at a very difficult time for the Conference, and this very difficult time incontestably places you yourself in an extremely difficult position. I listened with interest to the advice which has been bombarding you from all sides on what you can do, or should do, or should not, or cannot do, and I began to wonder whether these contradictory questions would enable us to make progress towards the specific objective we all share - to get down finally to a little work at the Conference on Disarmament.

On this occasion, as so often, the Ambassador of Mexico showed tremendous grace and courage. Tremendous grace because he took it on himself to raise the question which you were being asked to raise and which it was difficult for you to raise, that is: are there any objections to the draft

(Mrs. Bourgois, France)

decision of 22 May 1997? He put it clearly in those terms. He replied, moving this time from grace to natural courage, because all delegations have the right to express their opinions on any position at all - he replied, for his part, by saying: yes, Mexico does object to the decision of 22 May 1997. So, after a somewhat frustrating morning, I think that now perhaps we have taken a step backward, but at the same time a step forward in terms of transparency. We know that at this stage there is at least one delegation which objects to this decision and that therefore we will have to go back to work, take up the job again, using perhaps different wording from that which has been used so far. But we will not leave this room without having finally had an answer to the question which many of us have asked and which I had asked myself: is there or is there not consensus? There is not yet a consensus.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of France for her statement. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Morocco on a point of order.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): I believe that after the statement by Ambassador de Icaza of Mexico and Ambassador Bourgois of France the question which was raised and is the object of this discussion has been answered. Could we not adjourn the meeting, as the question has been answered? I think that now, Madam, you should tell us what you plan to do in the future, because as far as the Finnish Ambassador's question is concerned, it has been answered. So we can turn the page and discuss other things.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): In order that there should be no confusion, and for the public gallery, which it seems we are all now addressing, the delegation of Mexico does not oppose a consensus on the appointment of a coordinator on the subject of mines in the terms of the G.21 proposal. I did not want the question of the representative of Finland to be put to the meeting, for the simple reason that our objections to the 22 May paper are objections of form and we would not like the proposal to disappear. How fortunate that this question was not put by the President! If it had been, we would have opposed it being adopted.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Mexico. It was my intention to give the floor to the last speaker on my list, Ambassador Ramaker, before drawing conclusions from everything that we have heard this morning. I see that the representative of the United States of America has also asked for the floor. So I would like to give the floor to those two representatives and then we will see what we are going to do between now and the end of our meeting this morning. Ambassador Ramaker, you have the floor.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): I will be very brief, just to put on record - although my statement this morning is on record, of course - just one point, namely - and this in reaction to the distinguished Ambassador of India, who in the meantime has left the room - but I was in a position to convey to her the thrust of what I was going to say while she was leaving the room -

(Mr. Ramaker, Netherlands)

just to say that at no moment in my statement this morning did I mention or use the word "G-21" or "Group of 21", nor a "gag order". On the contrary, I am delighted to hear from the Ambassador of India, as I had already said in my statement, that she fully sees the importance of the role of the President of the Conference on Disarmament. As I said before, the main thrust of my statement this morning was that I warned that we should respect the prerogatives of the presidency of the Conference as delegations and of course, on the other hand, that the President should make full use of those prerogatives. But of course she should be put in a position to be able to do so, and therefore I do not envy your task, Madam, but I think that is a fundamental consideration, and I am delighted to learn from the remainder of this morning's interventions that apparently that is still possible, namely, that the delegations in this room would allow the President to make full use of her prerogatives and will let her use, take up, her full responsibilities.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): I shall keep my remarks brief because it is early in the afternoon or late in the morning, depending on how one looks at it. I was a bit concerned about the discussion of CD rules and the role of consensus, and as one of the few in this room who has a long history of participation in the CD, I would like to at least express the understanding of my delegation regarding how the rules work. Nothing in the CD rules, to our understanding, obliges a consensus to exist before a decision is put. A decision, however, to be agreed, has to be taken by consensus. There is an important distinction there. So the existence of the consensus itself, or the lack thereof, is determined by the act of taking the decision. While my delegation is grateful to know the positions of other delegations and how they might take a decision when the decision is put, the voicing of national positions is not in fact a substitute for the taking of a decision. So at least it is the understanding of my delegation that the request of you to put the decision still stands.

Mr. AMAT FORES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): Mention is being made of your asking the question, Madam, but we have not actually heard you asking any question, and we are wondering whether some delegates are going to take this decision for you. It is my delegation's understanding that there is a practice in this Conference that we should not depart from. Issues are put to a decision when there is a negotiated consensus; the consensus cannot emerge from raising the problem, but from these negotiations, and it is clear that it has been clearly demonstrated that here this consensus does not exist. The Group of 21, minus two or three of its countries which are members of it, has set out a very clear view of what our position is, so we cannot believe that a consensus can exist to that effect. I think that Cuba's position has been stated more than once. We are not opposed to discussing the matters within a programme of work that spells out which items this Conference on Disarmament must discuss, and so we want to make this situation perfectly clear because, in addition, we have not heard you putting any question, and many delegations are referring to this as though you had already asked this question.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Cuba for his clarifications.

So, at the end of these long hours in which each of you has had an opportunity to speak, I would like to say the following. No delegation and no group has tried to hinder the work of the President. I would like to make that clear, I would like to repeat it, I would not have accepted that and I will continue not to accept it. I will fully shoulder the responsibilities which fall on the President, as my predecessors did before me, and as those who will take the Chair will certainly do in the future. There was a manner of working in the Conference whereby attempts were made to reach consensus during consultations and to present the points to be discussed in the plenary when that consensus was reached. I have tried to continue to follow that path, and for that reason, at yesterday's Presidential consultations on 11 June, when the matter was raised of requesting this morning's plenary to take a decision on document CD/1458, calling for the appointment of a special coordinator on mines, there was no consensus that the request for a decision should be made. There was no question of requesting consensus to allow the President to ask a question. Groups clearly indicated that there was no consensus for a decision to be taken today, and for that reason, after some discussion in the Presidential consultations, it was proposed that we should suspend the plenary and meet again in open-ended informal consultations to discuss the two highest priorities we have before us - the question of mines and the question of the programme of work. And no consensus was obtained yesterday either as to which of those two points should be considered first.

So, let me repeat, no group insisted on a prior consensus and demanded that the Chairman should not ask a question unless consensus were obtained. I also said, to the representatives, the coordinators, of a group who brought this matter before me, that each delegation, each member of the Conference, was entitled to put the question to the Conference and ask for the Conference to take a stand. This is the situation we have before us this morning. One delegation, namely Finland, supported by several others, asked for the question to be put to the Conference concerning document CD/1458 as revised on 22 May. I repeat, a request was made concerning document CD/1458 as revised on 22 May. I therefore ask the Conference: is there any objection to the proposal? Mexico is objecting. We already have an objection. But let me conclude my question. The question to be put to the Conference concerns whether there was any objection to the proposal to appoint a special coordinator on landmines as contained in document CD/1458 presented on 22 May. The Conference has been able to observe that there is an objection, and the way the Conference on Disarmament works is that when there is an objection there is no consensus, if there is no consensus the question must therefore continue to be the subject of consultations aimed at finding a magic formula which would, as the Ambassador of India recalled a short while ago, serve as a basis for consensus on each of these questions which we have before us. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Finland.

Mr. REIMAA (Finland): I am sorry to take the floor again at this late hour. I am now totally confused. You yourself, Madam, referred to my statement and to my request and you put the question if there is any objection to the basis of the proposal, CD/1458. And then you said that there seems to be an objection to that. My reading is a different one. If I listened carefully to our Mexican Ambassador, he was attentively listening to my statement where I said, after that proposal was made on 22 May, intensive consultations on the same day resulted in a new, revised compromise version that was distributed in all languages. If I take it in a very positive way, the objection of our Mexican Ambassador was pro forma - not to the content of the revised version. If that needs further clarifications, I would propose that we do not close the plenary but we continue this official plenary later in the afternoon.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Finland. Let me correct what I said. I refered to document CD/1458, which served as a basis for the document of 22 May, so that is indeed it. I give the floor to the representative of Syria.

Mr. QRFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Thank you, Madam President, first of all, for your last clarification. I think the time has come to put an end to the games that some are playing at this Conference. It is clear that there is no consensus on the Australian proposal, as amended. All those who tried to impose the taking of a decision today are well aware that this decision will not be taken. I think the position of the Ambassador of Mexico is quite clear to the Ambassador of Finland, clear to me and clear to everybody, and also to you, Madam. For that reason, I think the proposal presented earlier by the Ambassador of India, to close the meeting and continue the informal consultations with a view to reaching a consensus, might have saved some time.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Syria. So now what we have is a clear position. There is no consensus on the request for the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel landmines. We all knew it - let us be honest enough to admit that that was the case. I had hoped, during the Presidential consultations yesterday, to continue the informal consultations so as to enable us to succeed in finding a solution. That has not been done for the time being. I propose once again that the Chair should be allowed to continue the consultations so as to succeed in finding a solution which can secure the support of all sides. If you agree, I will therefore hold these consultations, in various forms, which I would ask you to leave to my discretion. I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America.

Ms. CRITTENBERGER (United States of America): Thank you for at least putting the question that had been requested of you. I wanted to seek clarification regarding your summary. I believe I heard you say that there was no consensus in the Conference for the appointment of a special coordinator on mines. I believe what we had no consensus on was a specific proposal, CD/1458, as revised on 22 May. So I hope that we do not reach the conclusion prematurely that there is no consensus at all for a special coordinator.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States. We are indeed talking about the document of 22 May which asked the Conference to take a decision to appoint a special coordinator on mines. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Madam President, I merely wished to support your way of thinking for the future and to say that since there was a draft decision submitted for decision by the Conference that has not been adopted, it is no longer the basis of our consultations. Now new consultations on this subject will commence, but on a new basis. This text is dead.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Morocco for having clarified our method of work. So I will pursue my consultations with the various delegations concerned to see if we can take up this matter in a different way, which is highly possible in view of the number of proposals we have before us. We also have a request made by the Ambassador of Morocco to devote the plenary of 26 June to the question of expansion in all its aspects. So if the Conference has no objection, the plenary of 26 June will be devoted to that issue. I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. KESKINTEPE (Turkey): I have no intention of objecting to that, but I would like to state that we attach high importance to the discussion on the issue of expansion and we want to be present at that meeting. So we would like to propose that a plenary be held some time next week, at any time, so that the head of our delegation can be present at that meeting.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): Like others, I have long experience and a long history behind me in this Conference, and I am not sure that I understand what you just asked us to decide on, Madam President. I have no problem with the proposal by Morocco to discuss in plenary meetings the question of the expansion of membership. As he rightly observed, that is an urgent matter and many are still waiting in the wings, but the question that arises in my mind when I listen to you is whether you mean to say that the next plenary next Thursday would be exclusively devoted to this question, because I do not know the speakers' list, or whether there already is one, but delegations are of course free to make statements in the plenary. We had in the past the practice that at the beginning of the year, we decided on something called the work programme, which was an idea that during certain periods of the year the plenary sessions would be focused on but not exclusively devoted to certain subjects. Of course, we have dropped that habit and we now seem to make another use of the notion of the work programme, but that was the original idea and it still stands in practice, so it seems to me that while we could of course set aside time in the plenary in the way that the Ambassador of Morocco suggested, that should not be interpreted as being exclusively devoted to the subject because, as I said, there may be delegations - for the time being, not my delegation, by the way - who may want, as usual, to make normal statements in plenary. So I would like to hear a clarification on your part of what exactly you had in mind when you made the proposal.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Ramaker, and I pay tribute to his experience. I am putting the question to the Conference in order to ascertain what follow-up it intends to give to the proposal made by the Ambassador of Morocco, very specifically, to have the plenary on 26 June, that is to say in a fortnight, which could be devoted to the question of expansion. But, as we are all aware, every delegation has the right to raise the questions it wishes to raise during the course of our meetings, and I do not think that I used the term "exclusively" devoted to the expansion issue. I would like to remind you that the interpreters are giving us five minutes, no more. They have already all been extremely patient. I give the floor to the Ambassador of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): I had no intention of taking the floor again. I asked for it to be in two weeks' time, firstly, so that people could make preparations, and know that normally this meeting is devoted to expansion. Of course, if there are ministers passing through Geneva who are going to make a statement, there is no problem. If a delegation, knowing that we wish to talk about expansion, wishes to talk about something else, that is also a message to us to say that perhaps it is not terribly interested at this time - well, everyone will interpret it as he or she wishes. But the essence of what I propose is simply that it should be said that the theme of this plenary will be expansion, though everyone will do what he or she wishes. In any event everyone can speak on behalf of his or her country in the light of the instructions our countries have given us. If we are not given instructions to talk about that but given instructions to talk about other matters, there is no doubt that no one can prevent us from doing so. I think my proposal was quite clear, and everybody understands very well what I mean. We want to know what the members of the Conference think about expansion, in which direction they wish to take it and, if this is done in plenary; there is a text which we can revert to and subsequently discuss once we have found a special coordinator.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of Morocco for clarifying his request. I give the floor to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I would just draw attention to rule 30 of the rules of procedure. I do not think it is a question of having to have a minister here before we can speak to raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference. So I do not think we can be gagged on this any more than on anything else. So I would propose, in short, that you discuss this in informal consultations before you make a decision on this.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom. So we have this proposal submitted this morning by the Ambassador of Morocco to devote a plenary meeting to the question of expansion of the Conference. I see that certain delegations would like this question to be fine-tuned further during consultations. We can therefore undertake consultations on this question and when it is ready we will devote our work in plenary to it. I give the floor to the representative of Syria.

Mr. ORFI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): There is a proposal by Morocco. You asked a specific question, Madam: is there any objection? I did not hear anyone object to the Moroccan proposal. Hence there is no reason for delay.

Sir Michael WESTON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland): I would object then to that proposal on the grounds that it is contrary to rule 30 of the rules of procedure.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United Kingdom. So I intend to raise this matter in our consultations in the same way as I intend to pursue the consultations on the question of the appointment of a special coordinator on anti-personnel land mines. As for the expansion of the Conference, I am also going to follow the suggestion which has been made, which is not in contradiction with what has also been proposed, and try to see whether there is a friend of the Chair who would be willing to make a sacrifice to try to prepare the ground on this issue. I would like to thank you all for your patience, your contributions to our work.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday 19 June at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.